



NEWS RELEASE

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STATE LAUNCHES NEW TEST ON MONDAY

Idaho launches its new assessment program this month with a new name for its test.

Last March, the Idaho Legislature approved a new State Board of Education assessment program. The cornerstones of the program are fall and spring tests based on state standards for reading, language arts, and math.

Beginning Monday, Sept. 16, students in grades 2-10 will take pilot versions of Idaho Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT).

"This is an exciting time as we see years of planning, research, development, and hard work become reality," said Blake Hall, State Board of Education President. "We also know that there is still much work to do. This year we will be testing the tests, making improvements, and setting targets for student performance."

Superintendent of Public Instruction Marilyn Howard said the standards effort has been a systemic change for education in Idaho.

"It has not been business as usual for our schools or for the state. Our teachers and administrators should be commended for the work they've done to prepare for these tests," Howard said. "We expect as with any major change, that implementing a new testing system will be a little messy and we will find areas that need attention."

The ISAT also will be adapted to help the state meet federal requirements.

The State Department of Education, working with the state's testing contractor, will create a "blended" ISAT to be given each spring in grades 3-8 and high school.

"The merging of these assessments into one seamless test for the student is our goal," Hall said. "We want to meet these different requirements in a way that is transparent to the student."

Howard said the blended approach also would make the most efficient use of school time and state and federal funds.

"By working in concert, we believe we can maximize our limited resources to meet state and federal requirements," she said. The "blended" tests will be phased in over the next three years.

This summer, the State Board of Education and Department of Education finalized a \$3.5 million contract with Northwest Evaluation Association to produce the Idaho Standards Achievement Tests for the 2002-2003 school year.

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